

Five Minnesota cities named best places for young people

St. Louis Park, Mankato/North Mankato won award for third year in a row

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Five of the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People are here in Minnesota, according to America's Promise Alliance, which on Thursday announced the winners of its 2008 competition.

Leading the list of Minnesota cities are St. Louis Park and Mankato/North Mankato, which were among 44 cities nationwide that won the distinction for the third consecutive year.

St. Paul, Northfield and the eastern Twin Cities suburb of Landfall made the list for the first time.

More than 300 cities and communities from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico entered this year's competition put on by the national collaborative founded by retired general and former Secretary of State Colin Powell and wife, Alma, that advocates for the mental and physical well-being of children.

Communities submitted applications spelling out how they helped meet the five promises identified by America's Promise Alliance as being critical to the development of healthy and successful children. The promises are having caring adults, safe places, healthy starts, effective education and opportunities to help others.

In selecting St. Louis Park, the panel of judges touted the city for programs that introduce children to the arts and for allowing young people opportunities to help make decisions on community issues.

Mankato/North Mankato made the list for its mentoring program that helps incoming freshman transition into high school and for involving youth in government programs.

St. Paul got high marks for providing safe and positive places for kids to hang out after school, and for the numerous agencies that work together to help students strengthen their academic skills.

Northfield was lauded for its numerous youth groups, including a youth council that advises the mayor.

A one-on-one tutoring program and its use of grants and other funding to create efficient networks to support young people and their families helped Landfall win the award.

Other cities in the five-state area named as Best Communities for Young People include Grand Forks, N.D.; Green Bay, Crawford City, Jefferson County, Appleton/Fox Cities and Waukesha in Wisconsin; and Ames, Dubuque, Lamoni and Storm Lake, Buena Vista County in Iowa.